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H FOR MARK SMITH
H PLEASE PASS TO CODEL SMITH
DEPT FOR EUR, EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OREP](#) [OTRA](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [AFIN](#) [GR](#)

SUBJECT: GREECE: COUNTRY CLEARANCE AND THREAT ASSESSMENT
FOR CODEL SMITH

REF: A. STATE 006300

[¶](#)B. STATE 08759

[¶](#)C. ATHENS 108

[¶](#)11. Embassy warmly welcomes and grants country clearance for the visit of the Congressional Delegation led by Senator Gordon Smith (reftel B for names of all participants), to travel to Athens, Greece, January 28 - 29, 2007. Embassy point of contact is Political Officer Patrick Connell, who can be reached during office hours at 30-210-720-2551, on cellular at 30-694-405-7009, and via email to ConnellPD@state.gov. The Embassy's after hours duty receptionist can be reached at 30-210-729-4444. Lodging is at the Hotel Grande Bretagne, Constitution Square, tel. (30) 210-333-0000.

[¶](#)12. Embassy assistance has been arranged per reftel A for all meetings, lodging, and transportation. Ref C provided scenesetter for CODEL's meetings with GOG officials and relevant background information. Per e-mail from H, security information is provided below.

[¶](#)13. It is important that all visitors carefully read the information and instructions provided below. Post wants to ensure the best possible service to all official visitors and will work closely to arrange details of each visit.

[¶](#)14. Documents required: Diplomatic and official passport holders must have Greek diplomatic visas, a valid Schengen visa or diplomatic ID from any other Schengen country, in addition to their passport, in order to enter Greece. Holders of tourist passports do not/not require visas.

[¶](#)15. Currency: Greece is a member of the European Monetary Union, and the Euro is the currency of the country. Accommodation exchange will be provided upon arrival and prior to departure.

[¶](#)16. Security information:

[¶](#)A. Embassy Athens is designated &high8 for indigenous terrorism. In the past, local Greek terrorist groups have targeted prominent Greeks as well as certain non-Greek Officials, including Americans. We believe that the threat to official US Government personnel on short-term assignments to Greece or visiting for tourism is relatively low. The indigenous groups historically have engaged in extensive operational surveillance over long periods of time. In 2003 and again in 2004, the Greek Government made significant progress to combat domestic terrorism by successfully convicting the leader and key hit men of the November 17 terrorist organization and of the ELA. 17N was responsible

for assassinating prominent Greeks and five members of the US Mission over the course of its 30-year history. Convicted ELA members were responsible for several bombings, attempted murders and were involved in at least one assassination.

These convictions likely impacted on the operational capabilities of 17N and ELA, however the threat from domestic terrorism has not been completely eliminated. We urge vigilance and caution, as the worldwide threat from other terrorist groups against Americans in general remains high. Official Americans should assume they are potential targets.

¶B. On January 12 of this year, the U.S. Embassy was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. Over the past year the Embassy has experienced numerous bomb threats, protest marches, and anti-U.S. demonstrations. These protests are generally peaceful though a few provoked random acts of violence. Travelers to Greece are advised that protests or demonstrations could occur at any time; unwitting observers or bystanders might be identified, to their disadvantage, as Americans. RSO recommends that official U.S. travelers in Greece remain alert when moving about in public places and avoid certain places where demonstrators frequently congregate. These places include the Polytechnical University area, located on 28 October (Patission) Street between the National Archeological Museum and Omonia Square; Exarchion Square, located near Kolonaki; Omonia and Syntagma Squares, which are often used as launch sites for large demonstrations; and Mavili Square, located near the U.S. Embassy. Visitors should keep abreast of news about large demonstrations and avoid these areas and metro stops.

¶C. Crime is rated &medium8 in Greece. For TDY visitors, pick-pocketing and purse snatching are the most common crimes. Taxis are generally safe though metered cabs are recommended. Taxis too will often pick up more than one

passenger unless prior arrangements are made. Crimes of opportunity) thefts, break-ins, and occasional scams) are on the rise. Travelers should be especially cautious with wallets, purses, and parcels when traveling on crowded streets, public buses, trolleys, and/or subways. There have been several instances of motorcyclists approaching cars stuck in traffic, reaching through open windows or smashing closed ones, and stealing whatever is within reach. We have also recently learned of a new scenario in which motorcyclists open the trunk of a vehicle and remove the contents. The Embassy recommends keeping purses, parcels, handbags, etc. out of sight under the seat or on the floor of the car. Windows should be kept closed and doors locked. Pedestrians may also be confronted by beggars and other street people who may attempt to divert attention, then steal unprotected valuables) either by pick-pocketing or snatch-and-grab techniques. Women are generally safe from violent crime in Greece. Men are aggressive by American standards however when pursuing women.

¶D. Traffic in Greek urban areas, especially Athens and Thessaloniki, is undisciplined. Greece has a poor record within the European Union for traffic fatalities, mainly due to excessive speeding. Road rage is always a risk. Accidents can result in fistfights. Drivers in Greece should exercise caution and common sense. Drivers and pedestrians alike should exercise extreme caution when operating motor vehicles or when walking along roadways. Moreover, tourists who rent motorbikes either on the Greek mainland or its islands must wear helmets and must take special precautions on the local roads that are typically poorly maintained and frequently pothole-ridden. Greece also has a poor record within the European Union in motorcycle deaths.

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